

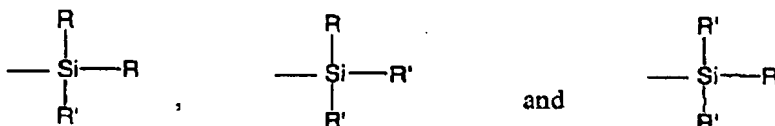
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IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims in the subject patent application as follows:

1. (currently amended) A silica reinforced rubber composition which consists essentially of (1) a rubbery polymer, (2) an elongated silica, wherein the elongated silica has a width that is within the range of about 5 nm to about 40 nm and wherein the elongated silica has a length of about 40 nm to about 300 nm, (3) a silica coupling agent of the structural formula: $Z-Alk-S_n-Alk-Z$, wherein Z is selected from the group consisting of



wherein R is an alkyl group of 1 to 4 carbon atoms, a cyclohexyl group or a phenyl group; wherein R' is an alkoxy group containing 1 to 8 carbon atoms or a cycloalkoxy group containing 5 to 8 carbon atoms; and wherein Alk is a divalent hydrocarbon of 1 to 18 carbon atoms, and wherein n represents an integer of 2 to 8 carbon atoms, and (3) (4) optionally, at least one conventional rubber compounding ingredient selected from the group consisting of carbon black, sulfur, fillers, accelerants, oils, waxes, scorch inhibiting agents, and processing aids.

2. (canceled)

3. (original) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 1 wherein the elongated silica is present at a level which is within the range of about 20 phr to about 70 phr.

4. (original) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 1 wherein the elongated silica is present at a level which is within the range of about 30 phr to about 60 phr.

5. (original) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 1 wherein the elongated silica is present at a level which is within the range of about 35 phr to

about 55 phr.

6. (original) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 1 wherein the elongated silica has a length of about 70 nm to about 120 nm.

7. (original) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 1 wherein the elongated silica has a length of about 80 nm to about 100 nm.

8. – 14. (canceled)

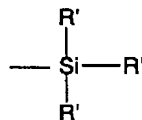
15. (original) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 1 wherein the rubbery polymer is a styrene-butadiene rubber.

16. (new) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 1 wherein the coupling agent is present at a level which is within the range of 0.01 parts by weight to about 1 parts by weight per part by weight of the silica.

17. (new) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 1 wherein the coupling agent is present at a level which is within the range of 0.02 parts by weight to about 0.4 parts by weight per part by weight of the silica.

18. (new) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 1 wherein the coupling agent is present at a level which is within the range of 0.05 parts by weight to about 0.25 parts by weight per part by weight of the silica.

19. (new) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 16 wherein the silica coupling agent is of the structural formula: Z-Alk-S_n-Alk-Z, wherein Z represents:



wherein R' represents an alkoxy group containing 2 to 4 carbon atoms, wherein Alk

represents a divalent hydrocarbon containing from 2 to 4 carbon atoms, and wherein n represents 2.

20. (new) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 19 wherein Alk represents a divalent hydrocarbon containing 3 carbon atoms.

21. (new) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 17 wherein the silica coupling agent is 3,3'-bis(triethoxysilylpropyl) disulfide.

22. (new) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 1 wherein the rubbery polymer is an amino group containing rubbery polymer.

23. (new) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 22 wherein the amino group containing rubbery polymer contains from about 0.5 weight percent to about 10 weight percent of an amino group containing monomer.

24. (new) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 22 wherein the amino group containing rubbery polymer contains from about 1 weight percent to about 4 weight percent of an amino group containing monomer.

25. (new) A silica reinforced rubber composition as specified in claim 1 wherein said composition consists of (1) the rubbery polymer, (2) the elongated silica, (3) the silica coupling, and (4) optionally, one or more of the conventional rubber compounding ingredients selected from the group consisting of carbon black, sulfur, fillers, accelerants, oils, waxes, scorch inhibiting agents, and processing aids.